

Commissioner's Weekly Wrap Up

DCS Communications Office

April 15, 2005

The Week Ahead

Mon., April 18 – The Commissioner meets with Governor Bredesen and the Select Committee on Children and Youth.

Wed., April 20 – The Commissioner speaks to Austin Peay State University social work students at their spring workshop.

Hamblen County CPS Employees Put Best Foot Forward in Andrea Walks

Submitted by Anthony Nease, Hamblen County CPS

Tony Nease, Debra Payne and Lea Ann Jansen from the Hamblen County CPS team participated in Andrea Walks on April 6 in Greene County. The entire walk was 12.7 miles. Nease completed 10 miles, while Payne and Jansen completed the entire course.

Nease and Payne were recognized in their local newspaper, the *Morristown Citizen's Tribune*, by being pictured on its front page. All three of them were also featured on the front page of the *Greeneville Sun*, and Nease was quoted by the newspaper about how useful the Child Advocacy Center has been to CPS in Hamblen County.

Nease, Payne and Jansen also got to spend time with first lady Andrea Conte and had the opportunity to network with several service providers during the walk.

DCS Case Worker Training – A Practice in Becoming a Model Agency

Submitted by Donna X. Johnson, Director of Training

As you all know, the training division and the Tennessee Social Work Education Consortium have worked diligently to deliver the new case manager certification program to new staff. This program has been piloted in the field, revised based on feedback from those pilot groups, and is moving full steam ahead. We are now piloting this program with experienced staff to receive feedback on the content before preparing to roll out the program statewide.

While we do discuss policies and procedures that guide our work with children and families, the program really emphasizes how a family-centered, culturally responsive and

strengths-based approach to our work makes the system function more effectively for children and families, and for our staff. The goal of this program is to help staff learn to engage families in planning for the safety, permanency and well-being of their children from the moment we enter their lives. If we, as an agency, can gain the trust of families from the outset, the more quickly all of us can move towards positive outcomes for children and families. The training division is excited about this shift in practice from being child-centered and problem-focused to family-centered and solution-focused, because it truly reflects and embraces the national standards of best practices, which are the basis of our DCS Practice Model.

We are equally excited about our partnership with the 13 consortium universities across the state to provide training regionally. We are making a concerted effort to reduce the amount of travel and overnight stays for staff participating in a training event. We hope you consider the universities in your regions as partners, as the universities are gearing up to provide not only the regionalized training but also a variety of other services the department determines are needed. While training is the vehicle that began the partnership with the universities, we believe the future holds many other opportunities to work with our colleagues in social work education.

Perhaps the most exciting endeavor is the opportunity to develop and deliver a variety of in-service courses that supports staff's professional development. For too long, pre-service training was seen as the "catch all" for training. As you all know, to truly develop as a professional, we need ongoing and meaningful training and support. Not only do we want to develop frontline staff working with families, but it is also our goal to provide an in-service training program that addresses the needs of all staff, including support personnel and supervisory and management personnel.

A full array of training courses on a variety of topics will not only enhance staff's current levels of performance, but also create the opportunity to increase knowledge and skills and grow as professionals. We also want to provide courses that specifically address topics that are unique to a particular region. Creating professional development plans for all staff and supporting those plans through quality training is the ultimate goal of the training division and the consortium.

Our goal is to become the number one information source in the state of Tennessee for staff to access in order to provide the very best service possible to our families and children. When will all of this happen? Certainly not overnight! However, through being willing to listen to staff about their professional development needs and through our continued partnership with the 13 of the finest universities nationwide, with time we will reach our goal. Stay tuned for continuous updates on our progress!

Michael Price Celebrates One-Year Anniversary

Submitted by Eddie Rhodman, Director, Infrastructure Development and Support

We take time out for the important things – those that give us hope, pride and a sense of purpose. This is one of those times. Staff members of the Office of Information Technology surprised Michael Price, executive director of the division, with appreciation get-together for a special milestone – one year of focused and determined leadership.

This marked Price's completion of his first year in his position. It is always good to be refocused and energized from time to time, and that is what Michael has done for us here at DCS Office of Information Systems. He is instilling in us one of his unique and to-the-point mottos: "If you can do it today, Tomorrow is too late".



DCS Office of Information Systems staff members surprise Michael Price (left) on the one-year anniversary of his arrival to the department.

High Initial Success Rate for GED

Submitted by Harry Myers, GED Chief Examiner

The GED program is an alternative route to an educational credential and a means by which eligible youth development center (YDC) students can achieve academic success. DCS has been recognized as a GED testing center since 1996. This has proved very

beneficial to many of our older students in the YDCs who lack credits to graduate through the traditional high school curriculum.

In 2002, the GED test was significantly modified in terms of its content and its scoring criteria. Using this new GED 2002 test format, the simple pass rate (total passed divided by total tested) for our past eligible students has consistently been at 67- 68 percent.

In an attempt to increase this pass rate and to standardize our instructional and screening methods, a system-wide survey of current practices was conducted last year. Following the survey, meetings were held with the YDC principals and group home teachers to discuss the results and to identify areas in which we could improve. As a result, a formal GED test policy was developed for the DCS school system. The policy became effective on January 1, 2005.

Through the hard work and dedication of the system's GED instructors and correctional principals, there is already good news! The current simple pass rate stands at 89 percent after the first quarter reporting period. While we must be cautious since the data is limited at this time, we are encouraged with what we are seeing and hopeful that the trend will continue.



Without a struggle, there can be no progress. – Frederick Douglas

Problems are only opportunities in work clothes. – Henry Kaiser

